

VZCZCXRO0792
PP RUEHBC RUEHKUK RUEHMOS
DE RUEHDE #0010/01 0021228
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P R 021228Z JAN 06
FM AMCONSUL DUBAI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7577
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 0015
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 0008
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0068
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0060
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0095
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 0459
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 1171
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEASRB/COMUSARCENT-CDRUSATHIRD FT MCPHERSON GA
RUCANAV/COMUSNAVCENT REAR MACDILL AFB FL
RUEADWD/DA WASHDC
RUEAHQA/HQ USAF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/CNO WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/COMUSCENTAF SHAW AFB SC
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 DUBAI 000010

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR PM, NEA, NEA/ARPI, NEA/I, NEA/ELA, INR; SECDEF
FOR OSD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 1/2/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PTER](#) [XF](#) [TC](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [SY](#) [LE](#) [XD](#) [SO](#)

SUBJECT: GENERAL ABIZAID MEETING WITH ABU DHABI CROWN PRINCE AND
DUBAI CROWN PRINCE

REF: A. ABU DHABI 5124; B. ABU DHABI 4715

DUBAI 00000010 001.2 OF 004

CLASSIFIED BY: Jillian L. Burns, Acting Consul General, Dubai,
UAE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (S) Summary: CENTCOM Commander General Abizaid met December 27 in Dubai with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ) and Dubai Crown Prince and UAE Minister of Defense General Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum (MBR). They discussed Iraq, Iran, Syria/Lebanon, and the war on terrorism. Both sides were in agreement over most issues, other than the question of loyalty to Iraq on the part of Iraqi Shia. In an earlier Abu Dhabi meeting with UAE Armed Forces Chief of Staff, General Abizaid discussed many of the same themes. End Summary.

2. (S) Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ) flew CENTCOM Commander General Abizaid, CENTCOM Director of Intelligence Brigadier General Custer, CENTCOM Deputy Director of Plans and Policy Brigadier General Kimmitt, and USLO Chief Colonel Simm to Dubai by helicopter December 27. They met Dubai Crown Prince and UAE Minister of Defense General Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum (MBR) for dinner, joined by the head of Dubai State Security Directorate (SSD), as well as MBZ's oldest son, Sheikh Khalid Bin Mohammed Al Nahyan, MBZ's personal associate Bessam Sreih, MBZ's principal aide and Director of International Affairs Yousef Al Otaiba, and acting Consul

General Jillian Burns (notetaker).

IRAQ

13. (S) Abizaid's primary message was that for Iraq to succeed, Sunnis must abandon the insurgency and participate in the new government. The responsibility is on all of us to convince Sunnis that in this regard, their interests and U.S. interests dovetail. MBR asked why the Sunnis should trust the U.S. Saying he did not want to rehash a point he has made in the past, MBR called the dismantling of the Iraqi army a mistake. Sunnis were left with no jobs or resources. Abizaid replied it was in Sunnis' own long-term interest to participate politically. If they did so, Abizaid was optimistic that Shia and Kurds would not be able to squeeze Sunnis out of power. One issue hurting the Sunnis, however, was the lack of strong political leaders emerging from among their ranks. MBZ and MBR took the point but demurred when Abizaid asked their own views on Sunni leaders.

14. (S) MBZ and MBR stressed that in Saddam-era Iraq, many had joined the Baath party out of necessity rather than conviction and should not now be excluded. Abizaid agreed, saying he believed the list of those excluded should be short, and the rest should be allowed to contribute to the new Iraq. He mentioned, however, that the Unified Iraqi Coalition (555) wanted a much longer list of names of former Baathists blackballed.

15. (S) Abizaid gave a positive overview of progress of standing up the Iraqi army, mentioning as an example that Iraqi forces are responsible for security for 25 percent of Baghdad. A significant obstacle, however, was the mindset among some in the Iraqi military that their job was to terrorize their own people, not grasping that there will be a reaction to such abuse of power. Abizaid noted that success with rehabilitating the Iraqi police lagged behind the rehabilitation of the Iraqi military.

DUBAI 00000010 002.2 OF 004

ZARQAWI/BAATHIST INSURGENCY

16. (S) Abizaid underscored the progress made against al-Qa'ida as a whole and specifically the Zarqawi network in Iraq, including cutting off sources of funding. All agreed the November 9 Amman bombings had greatly hurt Zarqawi's stature (presumably region-wide). Abizaid and Custer assessed that the Baathists probably had a lot more money than al-Qa'ida, squirreled away pre-war in accounts around the world by the Iraqi intelligence service or taken by fleeing Baathists into Syria. Unfortunately, no one knew yet who has control of these accounts.

17. (S) Custer briefed that while there was friction between Zarqawi and al-Qa'ida, they were united. Zarqawi certainly had a more direct hand these days in the operational aspect of the organization, compared to Zawahiri or bin Ladin, which boosted his stature.

IRAN IN IRAQ

18. (S) MBZ and MBR's principal message to Abizaid was their strong concern over the foothold Iran is gaining in Iraq. MBR said that while he views Shia as Muslims, he worries where their allegiance lies. Both MBZ and MBR believed that with the Shia tradition of veneration of religious figures, Iraqi Shia loyalties were more to their religion and, by extension, to Iran, than to their own country.

19. (S) Abizaid reiterated the fact that it behooves Sunnis to play a positive role, because chaos in Iraq serves only the interest of Iran. He agreed Iran is a danger and stressed that the U.S. and all the countries in the region must work together

to contain Iranian expansionism. He made clear that the U.S. stands with Iraq against Iran and that U.S.'s vast military superiority should not be discounted.

¶10. (S) On the other hand, Abizaid questioned this assumption about Iraqi Shia loyalties and said he did not believe Iran was calling the shots with all Iraqi Shia politicians. He maintained that as a rule, Iraqi Shia were Iraqi before they were Shia, citing the thousands of Shia who died fighting Iran in the Iran-Iraq war. He also did not believe there was much support among the Shia for a theocratic system of government in Iraq.

IRANIAN PRESIDENT AHMADINEJAD

¶11. (S) All agreed with Abizaid that Iran's new president Ahmadinejad seemed unbalanced, crazy even, and MBR shook his head at the idea of Ahmadinejad acquiring nuclear weapons. MBR and MBZ mentioned the rumors about Ahmadinejad's belief in the imminent return of the missing Imam and said some think that Ahmadinejad believes himself to be an incarnation of the "hidden" Twelfth Imam. Abizaid said Sultan Qaboos of Oman forecast to him that Ahmadinejad would be sidelined in a few months (Note: a view many Iranians have expressed to AmConsulate Dubai). MBZ noted that Ahmadinejad's rhetoric follows the line of Khomeini and that he does have a populist following. Custer added Ahmadinejad seemed to be mimicking Moqtada al Sadr's strategies in Iraq for attracting followers among the poorer strata of society.

FIGHTING TERRORISM IN THE UAE AND ELSEWHERE

DUBAI 00000010 003.2 OF 004

¶12. (S) Abizaid commended UAE efforts against terrorism and said the UAE was a role model in terms of its success in providing a strong economy for its people. Abizaid asked for their assessment of vulnerability to an attack in the UAE. MBZ said he thought it more likely that al-Qa'ida would try again soon to hit the U.S. in order to rebuild its credibility, and said it was mostly luck that had spared the U.S. a repeat attack to date.

¶13. (S) MBZ and MBR saw a continuing threat in the region from the Muslim Brotherhood (a term Emirati leadership uses generically to refer to Islamic extremists). The Dubai SSD Director mentioned how difficult it was to monitor the sermons here. He also said the UAE kept anyone who went to Afghanistan under close eye and had arrested some of them. He differentiated between those who had gone in previous years to fight the Soviets with the newer generation. MBR then told the story of going to visit someone who had been planning an attack here. The man was living in miserable conditions in a small room of a big house and complained about quality of life in the country. MBR said the conditions here are not like in Saudi Arabia or Afghanistan and reminded him of all the government made available to him in terms of land and money. MBR told him it was your father, not the government, who had deprived you of what was yours. The man then changed his ways and later turned in a colleague who was planning to abduct U.S. soldiers, after he failed to convince him to abandon his plans.

¶14. (S) Abizaid, Custer, MBZ, and MBR all agreed that Somalia posed the highest risk as a new site for terrorist training grounds. The Dubai SSD Director mentioned operations the UAE had been involved in regarding Somalia. Abizaid said the U.S. base in Djibouti was an asset necessary to monitor the situation.

SYRIA/LEBANON

¶15. (S) Rather than give their own assessment of the situation in Syria and Lebanon, MBZ and MBR asked Bessam Sreih, a local businessman of Lebanese origin with UAE citizenship and a personal friend of MBZ, to tell the Americans what he thought.

Sreih said in unequivocal terms that he thought the government in Syria was archaic, Stalinist, and irredeemable. He believed the decisions to assassinate Hariri, Tueni, and others went all the way to the top to Bashar al-Asad. Sreih claimed that in the entirety of Hafez al-Asad's regime, the father had assassinated 10 people, while Bashar had killed more than that in one year. He also said Saudi Secretary General of the National Security Council Prince Bandar bin Sultan told him after meeting Bashar three times that Bashar never once mentioned reform. Sreih's greatest concern was that the U.S. would strike a bargain with Syria that would allow the regime to stay in power.

¶16. (S) MBR did not seem to share Sreih's complete condemnation of President Asad. He mentioned that when Bashar had visited him in Dubai (most likely December 2003), Bashar looked around him and said, give me a year (to bring similar economic change to Syria). A while later, Bashar revised his estimate and said he'd need five years.

¶17. (S) Abizaaid said that there had been some limited improvement in Syrian cooperation along the Iraqi border, and that he was optimistic about the future of Lebanon. Regarding Syria, he said no regime that does not modernize and listen to the demands of its people will survive.

¶18. (S) Comment: After the meeting, General Abizaaid shared with USLO some of his observations. He was taken by the change in Emirati priorities, which used to be Iraq, al Qa'ida, Iran (in

DUBAI 00000010 004.2 OF 004

that order), and now appears to be Iran, al Qa'ida, Iraq. He repeated that he does not agree with the Sheikhs regarding the Shia: he believes Iraqi Shia are Iraqis first, and Shia second, and that they will not be swayed by Tehran if it is not in their direct, national interests. End comment.

ABU DHABI MEETING WITH UAE ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF

¶19. (S) In an earlier meeting that day with UAE Armed Forces Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Hamad Thani Al Rumaithy at General Headquarters in Abu Dhabi, attended by CDA and USLO Chief, General Abizaaid discussed many of the same themes. He opened by expressing thanks for the ongoing contributions of UAE Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan. Hamad Thani responded that he was satisfied with both the roles assigned to UAE SOF as well as their integration in the Coalition campaign. Abizaaid also thanked Hamad Thani for UAE's contributions to Pakistan following the November 2005 earthquake, especially UAE's contribution (at CENTCOM request) of much-needed spare parts for Pakistan's over-tasked MI-17 helicopter fleet. Abizaaid continued by assuring Hamad Thani that the recently announced plan to reduce U.S. forces in Iraq was a calculated decision based upon the improving capability of Iraqi forces to assume a greater share of the burden. Hamad Thani expressed his concern that any premature withdrawal of U.S. forces would lead to an inevitable clash between Sunni and Shia Iraqis, but was satisfied that the planned reduction was timely.

SYRIA, SAUDI ARABIA, AL-QA'IDA

20.(S) When asked by Hamad Thani about Syria, Abizaaid noted the Syrians are doing a much better job of controlling their border with Iraq, especially their efforts to stem the flow of foreign fighters, but that the network remaining inside Syria -- especially the hardcore Baathists -- ultimately poses a bigger threat to Syria than it does to Iraq. Hamad Thani agreed. Regarding the situation in Saudi Arabia, Hamad Thani offered his opinion that the roots of terrorism lay in the problems there. He further noted that if the Saudi government were to fail, "we may be next (referring to the spread of Islamic radicalism)." Hamad Thani then offered his opinions regarding the status of al-Qa'ida. He acknowledged that AQ was certainly weaker now than at any other point in recent years, but that it was not yet ready to break. He asserted his belief that "we must continue

to join our efforts" to defeat this common enemy. He then concluded that "as Muslims, we must disprove what al-Qa'ida asserts about Islam."

¶21. (U) This message has been cleared by General Abizaid and Embassy Abu Dhabi.
BURNS